

Rethink
Mental
Illness.

Young person's
wellness plan.

Looking after myself.



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Working together to give young carers a voice.
www.childrensociety.org.uk/youngcarer

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This resource was produced by Rethink Mental Illness for Young Carers in Focus in partnership with:



Introduction

As a young carer you will often find yourself looking after someone else in your family. Being a young carer can be challenging and everyone needs a little support and time out, just to be themselves and relax.

This booklet will help you think about and develop some useful ways of coping. It can remind you where to go when things aren't going so well and realise it is okay to ask for help or support for yourself. It helps you to explore your caring role and what you feel is good and not so good about it.

The title 'Looking after Myself' is not about being self-centred or uncaring. It simply means that you are allowed and have the right to take care of yourself and recognise the pressures that you can face as a young carer.

It can take time to put a plan like this together, and it might help you to do this with someone you feel is able to support you (so, this could be a project worker, teacher family member, friend). You can also add to, or adapt this plan at any time in the future.

Keep using the things you explore in this booklet. Don't just fill it in and forget about it – it will take a little time to form new habits and get into new ways of thinking and that's how your family and project worker can support you!

Most of all enjoy taking the time out to think about how you can look after yourself.



What is my caring role?

The person I help care for is:

I help care for them because:

If you are caring for a parent, brother or sister, it can be hard to find the time to look after yourself as well. The 'Looking After Myself' plan helps you to think about how to do this, and who can help. It can also help you to get to know yourself better – so that you know what things are like when they are going well, or not so well.

You might want to think about sharing this plan with someone you trust, or someone who could support you to put this plan into practice.



It is really important
for you to look after
yourself.



Now have a think about how you feel about caring. What is good and what is not so good? Use words or pictures.



What do we mean by 'well' and 'wellbeing'?

We use the word 'well' throughout this plan. Whether or not you have a physical or mental illness, we mean feeling that you have a sense of positive wellbeing when we say 'well'.

Wellbeing can include:

- Feeling good.
- Being able to do the things that mean something (are important) to you.
- Feeling in control.
- Having the resilience to 'bounce back' if things go wrong, or change (with some additional help/support if you need it).

'Wellbeing' is different for everybody, and people will do many different things to keep themselves feeling well. These could include:

- Talking to someone.
- Doing some exercise (or physical activity).
- Taking a break (going for a walk, listening to some music, reading a book, watching a film).
- Trying some relaxation techniques.

Feeling good



Daily life

Describe how you are when things are going well, using any words that come to mind to describe how you feel, what you like to do etc.



Put together a box of 'favorite things' that help you to stay calm and feel happy – this could include some music, a film, a good book, photographs of family/ friends. In fact, anything that makes you smile!

Think about what helps you to stay on top of things – it's important to think about the day to day (possibly small) things that you do that make you feel well or help you to stay on top of things.

These could include:

- Eating well (3 meals a day).
- Taking a few minutes for yourself when you need to.
- Seeing friends or spending time with your family.



The things that make me feel calm, focused and happy are:

When things don't feel so good – how do I know when things are difficult?

Early warning signs

There might be thing that you notice that 'alert' you that things are not going as well as usual. Your early warning signs could include things like:

- Your sleep pattern becoming disturbed (or changing).
- Feeling more irritable or 'snappy' than usual.
- Feeling sad, anxious or worried more than usual.
- Physical signs (being more tired than usual, noticing you have lots of aches and pains).

It can be helpful to think about and recognise these signs in yourself, so that you can include in your plan how to deal with them.



Draw a 'mind map' of the things that you do when you feel stressed and identify the ones that help – this means you can do more of the helpful ones instead of doing things that don't make you feel any better.



Think about a couple of times when things have not been so easy – what happened during that time and what made things difficult? How often do these things happen? Use words or pictures.

How do I manage these difficulties?



Think about the times you talked about on the previous page. When things are difficult how do you cope? Don't worry if you feel you do not cope well at the moment. We'll look at ways of helping you do this later on in the booklet. Use words or pictures.



Recognising triggers

There are many things that happen in our lives that can affect the way we feel. These ‘triggers’ could be related to your caring role or other areas of your life – having to take on more responsibility, problems at school or work, arguing with the people close to you etc.

We all have different triggers, and it can be helpful to know what yours are.

It might be helpful to ask someone who knows you well what they think your early warning signs might be – they may pick up on things that we do not always notice ourselves.

How about making a plan of what you can do when you notice any early warning signs that might mean things are not going so well?

The table headings and examples opposite can help you with this.



You might want to share what you have learnt about your early warning signs with someone.

Early warning sign	How can I deal with this?	Who might I want to speak to?
Feeling anxious and being quite snappy (short tempered) with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Try to work out what has made me feel like this (has anything changed?)• Tell someone how I am feeling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project worker• Teacher• Friend



More about triggers

There are many things that happen in our lives that can affect the way we feel. These ‘triggers’ could be related to your caring role or other areas of your life – having to take on more responsibility, problems at school or work, arguing with the people close to you etc. We all have different triggers, and it can be helpful to know what yours are.

If you are able to identify your triggers, you can also think about how you can deal with them so that they don’t affect your wellbeing too much. You might:

- Think about what has helped to deal with a particular situation before.
- Think about what you need or want to happen – do you need some additional support, or some information that could help you to deal with the situation and cope better with what is happening/how you are feeling about it.
- Talk to someone about what is making you feel that you are not coping as well as usual.



REMEMBER

Everyone’s wellbeing and how they feel can go up and down, and this isn’t always a sign of a mental illness. However, if how you are feeling is having an impact on your day to day life (especially if it is stopping you from doing the things you usually enjoy) or you are worried about how you are feeling, you should always tell a trusted adult and you could go to see your GP. They will be able to help you if you need more support. Looking after yourself and your wellbeing will also mean you are able to support the people around you better.

Where do I go for support?

All people at some time in their lives will need some support whether it is a lot or a little. Think about who you can go to when things are difficult. Perhaps you could talk to someone you trust like your project worker, a wider family member or friend.



Use words or pictures to make a note of them below.

**Think about your circles of friendship –
who is around to support you?**

How can I make myself feel better?

As well as talking things over with someone you trust there are other things you can do to relax and/or make you feel happy. Have a think about the things you enjoy and how you can fit them into your life. Remember to do these things regularly to build a routine and not just when things are difficult.



Use words or pictures to describe them.



Visit www.mindfull.org for some free interactive self help tools to help boost your self awareness.

What does not work... for me?

Some things that people suggest to make us feel better don't work as we are all individual and have different tastes and preferences. You might also find that some things that usually help you feel better don't always work. It can depend on how you feel and what you need at the time.

Sometimes we know what doesn't make us feel better and can even make us feel worse. Think about what doesn't make you feel better. This might be things that you do yourself or that other people do. You could think about a time in the past where you felt you didn't have the right support.



Use words or pictures to describe.



How will I know when things are getting better?

If we have been through a difficult or rough patch in our lives there will come a point where things will not seem quite as bad. The situation may have calmed down, life will seem less chaotic or you will feel less stressed, worried or angry.



Using words or pictures note in the space below what you would see around you or how you would feel when things seem to be getting better.

Make a pledge: promise to take some time out for yourself on a regular basis to do something you enjoy!

Planning for when I need a bit more support

This page is designed to help you to identify what you can do when things are difficult. You may want to share your plan with a trusted adult, or you can take out this page and put it on your wall or somewhere that you can easily find it. We have given you some examples to start you off below:

1. Talk to your project worker if you are worried about how you are feeling.
2. If you are feeling unwell yourself, talk to a trusted adult or plan to see your GP.
3. Look back over the pages in this booklet where you identified the things that help you to feel better – you could try doing some of these things... go for a walk, listen to some music, watch a film or find something to do that you enjoy.
4. If you are worried and need someone to talk to you could call Childline (on 0800 1111) who offer help and advice to young people on a wide range of different issues.
5. In an emergency, or if you feel unsafe, you can call the emergency services.

You can start one of your own below:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

My contacts

Write in the numbers of some contacts you may need below:

GP



Young carers project



School/college



Work



Family member



Friend



Other support



Other support



Useful sources of information and support for young people:

www.rethink.org/living-with-mental-illness/young-people

www.thesite.org/healthandwellbeing/mentalhealth

www.mindfull.org

www.youngminds.org.uk/for_children_young_people

Doc Ready – an interactive app designed to help you to prepare for a meeting with a GP or health professional: www.docready.org

You can find more resources, information, activities and blogs on the Young Carers in Focus network page by visiting www.makewav.es/ycif

We hope you find this guide useful and it helps you to manage your wellbeing.



Rethink Mental Illness is a partner in:

time to change
let's end mental health discrimination

The logo for Rethink Mental Illness, featuring the text "Rethink Mental Illness." in a white, sans-serif font inside a white circle.

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Mental
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**Leading the way to a better
quality of life for everyone
affected by severe mental illness.**

For further information
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